

The Eagle & The Crescent

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Transition to Self-Reliance

Sept. 30, 2005

Corps' senior leaders visit warriors in Iraq

Cpl. James D. Hamel

2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (FWD)

AL ASAD, Iraq -- General Michael Hagee, 33rd Commandant of the Marine Corps, and Sgt. Maj. John L. Estrada, 15th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, visited here, Sept. 25.

The two leaders' visit brought them to other Marine Corps installations throughout Al Anbar province, as they checked on their Marines fighting the War on Terror.

After arriving in Al Asad, the two ate an early morning breakfast with Marines chosen from different units within the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (FWD). At the end of the breakfast, Estrada announced and recognized the 2nd MAW (FWD), "Marine of the Quarter."

Corporal James F. Aguilar, the Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron 2 non-commissioned officer of the quarter and Camden, N.J., native, said the breakfast offered a unique opportunity to pick the brain of the most senior Marine in the Corps.

"It was interesting to sit there and hear his thoughts about the Marine Corps and Iraq," he said. "Having him ask us what we thought was pretty cool. It's pretty humbling sitting across from all those stars."

After leaving the dining facility, Hagee and Estrada presided over a town hall meeting for Marines and Sailors from Al Asad.

"Anytime I get to come to (this area



Cpl. James D. Hamel

Sergeant Maj. John L. Estrada, 15th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, talks to Marines during a town hall meeting at Al Asad, Iraq, Sept. 25.

of responsibility), it is the highlight of my time as Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps," Estrada told the assembled crowd. "This is where you all are doing Marine Corps things. This is why you signed up."

Estrada thanked those who have served multiple tours in Iraq, and thanked the leaders of Marines especially.

"I always say this, the Marines of today are better than ever," he said. "(Even war veterans) look at you as setting a new standard."

The commandant asked the Marines how they were doing, and they replied in unison, "Ooh-Rah."

"That's right," he told them. "You're right, you all are doing well. I'm really proud of you."





The commandant fielded questions about the future of Marine Corps' aviation assets, including the CH-46 and MV-22 Osprey.

Hagee also told the Marines that when he meets leaders from other military services, they always compliment the quality of individual Marines.

"They tell me one thing, 'we want to be just like you,'" he said. "You all set the professional standard for the warrior class."

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FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
 Low: 72F High: 96F	 Low: 70F High: 96F	 Low: 70F High: 97F	 Low: 71F High: 98F
Sunrise 0658D Sunset 1851D ILLUM 8%	Sunrise 0559C Sunset 1749C ILLUM 3%	Sunrise 0559C Sunset 1748C ILLUM 0%	Sunrise 0600C Sunset 1747C ILLUM 0%

By Gunnery Sgt. Steven L. Saxton

Camp Fallujah MWR Events

Tonight: R&B Night at 9:30 p.m.
 Saturday: Bench Press Tournament at 8 a.m.
 Tuesday: Spades Night at 8 p.m.
 Wednesday: Checkers Tournament at 8 p.m.
 Thursday: Pool Tournament at 8 p.m.

AT THE MWR GYM

For more information, contact the MWR supervisor at crystal.nadeau@halliburton.com.

Letters to the Editor:

*I really enjoy reading about what is going on over there aside from the U.S. media version!!

You are doing a great job to lift our spirits and your reports are shared with many friends and co-workers, Thanks again.

Marine dad, Bob Higdon

*I was a Marine in 1974 and was a member of the 2nd Force Service Regiment force troops. I wish to say thank you for all that you are doing for our country. I know it is not an easy job, if I could be there with you I would be, but I am too old now to fight, but I still serve with (to help with) home land defense. I patrol waterways and look for the bad guys on our shores.

I am a former police officer. I owe the Marine Corps my life because it taught me the basics to survive in difficult times. Semper Fi brothers and sisters and know that you have a fan at home that loves each and every one of you.

Semper Fi and Semper Paratus!

*Hi. My son was one of 75 students nationwide to receive a four-year scholarship from the Marine Corps. He's a member of the NROTC at UVA. His high school class sent one to West Point, three went straight into the Marines, and Brad to UVA thanks to the Marines. Now one will go into the Navy to be a corpsman and hopefully hook up with the Marines after training. All this from a small town in New Jersey that had graduating class of 163.

Just wanted to let you know how much you are affecting us back here. Love to you all. You are in my prayers daily, Mom Fromm

II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)

Maj. Gen. Stephen T. Johnson, Commanding General
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 Lance Cpl. Joshua C. Cox

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From the Director of Public Affairs:



...serving our country. Those were different times but we must remember the past and appreciate the present, because from what I have seen and experienced, most Americans today support us. If you haven't seen this Web site – www.americasupportsyou.mil – I encourage you to check it out and tell your family and friends about it.

During my recent travels back to eastern North Carolina for R&R, I encountered numerous people – and organizations -- who support those of us serving our country during these challenging times. I can tell you from first hand experience that the support for those of us serving in Iraq, and in the military in general, remains strong.

At the airport in Dallas, a group of volunteers meets every returning flight, providing hugs, handshakes and encouragement, as well as gifts. Also in Dallas, I had a first class passenger on my flight to Charlotte offer to give up his seat for me. The airline politely declined and offered the upgrade itself. All along the way, I was greeted by Americans who wanted to shake my hand, thank me for my service or ask questions about what's "really happening" in Iraq. The experience was humbling and heartwarming.

Contrast that with the experience of our predecessors who served during Vietnam. I met two former Marines during my trip who told of being spat upon when they returned home from

Many of us who follow the news back in the United States have been disappointed or concerned that the American people don't get the full picture of what is happening in Iraq today (confirmed by some of the questions I got while I was traveling). Those of us in Public Affairs are continually seeking ways to get more information to the American public. Our Web site and this publication, *The Eagle & The Crescent*, are good vehicles to help spread the word about the sacrifices and accomplishments of the men and women of II MEF (FWD). For those who have listed the Web site on your e-mails, or sent the URL and/or TE&TC to family and friends, thank you for helping to increase our reach. If you are new to MNF-W or haven't done so yet, I ask that you consider taking one of those steps. The media can help us reach large numbers of people but we can't rely solely on them to tell our story.

Col. Dave Lapan

Director, II MEF (FWD) Public Affairs
cepaowo@cemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil

Fallujah Church Service Schedule

PROTESTANT WORSHIP SERVICES

Sunday:
 Protestant Worship 9 a.m. CLB-8 theater
 Protestant Communion 9:15 a.m. Base Chapel
 Contemporary Worship 10:30 a.m. Base Chapel
 Gospel Service 1 p.m. Base Chapel
 Latter Day Saints (Mormon) 8:30 a.m. Camp Incheon/RCT Fellowship Center
 Latter Day Saints (Mormon) 6:30 p.m. Camp Incheon/RCT Fellowship Center

CATHOLIC MASS / CONFESSIONS

Catholic Confession Sun. 7:15 a.m. Base Chapel
 Catholic Mass Sun. 8 a.m. Base Chapel
 Catholic Mass Mon. 6 p.m. Base Chapel
 Catholic Mass Tues. 6 p.m. Base Chapel
 Catholic Mass Wed. 6 p.m. Base Chapel
 Catholic Mass Wed. 10:30 p.m. DFAC-1 TV Room
 Catholic Mass Thurs. 6 p.m. Base Chapel
 Catholic Mass Fri. 6 p.m. Base Chapel
 Catholic Confession Sat. 5:15 p.m. Base Chapel

Commanding General's Letter:



Dear Family and Friends,

Once again, I bring you greetings from Iraq, where I continue to see remarkable progress. Your Marines, Sailors and Soldiers are doing outstanding work we can all be proud of.

Noted historian and former librarian of Congress, Daniel J Boorstin, once wrote:

"In our world of big names, curiously, our true heroes tend to be anonymous. In this life of illusion and quasi-illusion, the

person of solid virtues who can be admired for something more substantial than his well-knownness often proves to be the unsung hero: the teacher, the nurse, the mother, the honest cop, the hard worker at lonely, underpaid, unglamorous, unpublicized jobs.

Boorstin's words apply here twenty-four hours a day – and no more so than in two weeks when the people of Iraq vote to ratify their new constitution. On the October 15th constitutional referendum, many people in Iraq will vote for the first time in their lives. While Iraqis exercise their right to vote, they face intimidation and murder and they are the "unsung heroes."

Once Iraqis ratify their constitution, it is expected that they will vote again in December to select new representatives and will be well on their way toward taking control of their own destiny. The democratic process is in motion and while the Iraqi people make history, so do your Marines, Sailors and Soldiers sustaining that effort.

Our role in this election will be different than the last. Our forces will be providing outer perimeter security while Iraqi Security Forces take on a new and direct role securing the polls and immediate areas. While we assist in these milestone elections, our efforts in providing security and stability,

training Iraqi Security Forces and helping to rebuild cities also continues to gain ground.

As a result of everyone's perseverance and personal risk, children here are going to school; water and electricity are widely available in the provinces of Karbala and Najaf which, almost one year ago, were dysfunctional. Forward operating bases in Najaf continue to be turned over to Iraqi Security Forces. Last but not least, thanks to our Military Training Teams and joint coalition and Iraqi patrols, Iraqi Security Forces and everyday people are taking charge and securing their national interests.

As we continue the mission and pass more responsibility to Iraqis, I ask that our families and friends understand what the people of Iraq have and will continue to endure as they build a firm foundation for their country. In Al Anbar province progress in security, infrastructure, and personal freedom is seen daily. With the support of coalition forces and with your continued encouragement and prayers, I am confident that we will continue to succeed together.

Semper Fidelis,

S.T. Johnson

Major General, U.S. Marine Corps

Commanding General

II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)

How good has your memory been?

Chaplain (Lt. Cmdr.) Tim Power

Combat Logistics Battalion 8

Memory stores our experiences and if you will the stories of our life. Memory is necessary for the quality of life most of us are used to. I use my memory to go back and borrow lessons from previous deployments on how to pace myself on this one.

I remember ways to do my job more effectively overseas, and I use them. When I use my memory it is often accompanied by sensory information. A Psalm for example invites the reader, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." As I experience the Lord and remember my experiences with God, it will involve my senses. Taste and sight are two of those senses from the Psalm, and I'll write about how they are a part of memory.

We know memories include what we taste. Our chow halls in Iraq remind us of the states. They might remind us of favorite meals. They might remind us of loved ones we've eaten with. They might remind us of our ethnic heritage. They might remind us of previous international experiences. And they might remind us of our promises about keeping fit. A meal at home eaten by family or friends separated from their warrior



loved one can be that ideal opportunity to offer a prayer of thanksgiving and petition and remember your special relationship with that loved one around a meal full of taste memories. Take those opportunities to remember.

We know memories also include what we see. Photos or moving images of loved ones are sights for bloodshot, dusty, desert squinty eyes. They and other objects are solid reminders of good times, commitments, beauty, and kindness. To illustrate how sight affects memory I'll borrow from one of my favorite parts of a comedy called *Throw Momma From the Train*. It's the part when the main character, played by Danny DeVito, shows his coin collection. He shows all modern coins you wouldn't see displayed in any coin shop. And he starts describing why he likes to look at the coins. All the coins were given to him when he was younger, and they reminded him of someone being kind to him. Like this character, look at objects like photos or others that flood you with positive memories of times together with your warrior loved one.

Don't forget to taste and see and by doing so invite many memories that attach you to someone that is special to you. Happy memories until your loved one's mission is honorably completed.

MPs stay ahead of insurgency's efforts

Sgt. Josh H. Hauser

2nd Force Service Support Group (FWD)

CAMP TAQADDUM, Iraq -- "Is everybody in condition one?"

"Yes sergeant!"

"Alright, let's move."

And with that simple exchange, the Marines of Alpha Company, Combat Logistics Regiment 25, 2nd Force Service Support Group (Forward), roll past the final entry control point of Camp Taqaddum for yet another security patrol on Iraq's dangerous and sometimes deadly roadways.

These Marines are tasked with traveling and clearing the various routes surrounding Taqaddum and searching for improvised explosive devices, insurgents and any suspicious activity.

Sergeant Kevin E. Brock, 3rd platoon squad leader, has been on these missions before. He's currently on his second tour here. His experience extends back to a seven-month tour he pulled here a year ago. With no Little Tennessee River or rolling hills of lush, green forest, the Iraq desert is a far cry from the Monroe County, Tenn., native's roots. Instead of a glimpse of the Appalachian Mountains to the west, Brock's senses take in a much different landscape: one littered with sand, garbage and the constant threat of danger on the horizon.

"You got a vehicle on the right," Brock yells to his gunner and then again into the radio for the rest of the convoy.

The vehicle is stopped a safe distance from an upcoming intersection and waiting for the patrol to pass before proceeding.

"Most vehicles will pull off the road when they see us coming," Brock says. "The ones that don't are usually the VBIEDS [vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices]."

The patrol continues on to the first of many checkpoints. Finally, the military police come to a halt.

Brock's driver, Lance Cpl. Joseph J. Clinton, peers through the vehicles bulletproof glass for any signs of danger before stepping out. Clinton, Brock and the rest of the patrol dismount and search the area for any unusual objects, a difficult task with the large amount of trash lying about. Clinton, a military policeman and 20-year-old Phoenix native, is the fifth generation of his family to serve the United States in a time of war and commented that spotting danger in Iraq is a constant learning experience.

"I ask questions," Clinton says pointedly. "It's important to have someone like Sergeant Brock to learn from and help mold your senses. You get to the point where you notice if something is unusual or just doesn't seem right."

After scouring the area, their search turns up nothing but a beetle which hurries from their footsteps as they return to their vehicles. The Marines mount up and continue on down a desolate stretch of road. As they proceed to the next checkpoint, Brock tries to describe the knack he has developed for seeing what most people would consider nothing.

"I don't know how to explain it," Brock says, referring to the task of searching for IEDs. "You just get to know what you're looking for."

The Marines take in everything around them, constantly communicating and looking for trouble.

"You notice something different today Clinton?" Brock quizzes his driver.

"Traffic's not as busy today, sergeant," he replies.

See MP, Page 10



Sgt. Josh H. Hauser

Sgt. Kevin E. Brock (standing, right), a military policeman and squad leader assigned to Combat Logistics Regiment 25, 2nd Force Service Support Group (FWD), briefs his Marines prior to a security patrol near Camp Taqaddum, Iraq, Sept. 22.

Trial by fire, incoming Marines come under attack

Cpl. Shane Suzuki
2nd Marine Division

AR RAMADI, Iraq -- As part of continuing operations to eliminate the insurgency in Ar Ramadi and to help acquaint the incoming 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment to the neighborhoods they will be responsible for, 2nd Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, recently conducted a number of patrols to find both insurgents and weapons.

The patrols are part of the normal operations the Marines of 1st Battalion, 5th Marines have undertaken since arriving in the city more than seven months ago. However, now that 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines is here, the incoming squads and platoon leaders

have begun accompanying the battalion's patrols to see how the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines handled objectives such as searching cars, spotting improvised explosive devices and raiding suspected hiding spots of insurgents.

"A lot of insurgents live in this area," said 2nd Lt. Tyler Holt, Platoon Commander, 2nd Platoon, Company A. "The more we can show the incoming Marines, the better."

Their first mission did exactly that as the Marines raided a suspected home of an insurgent supporter and provided a tour of the Government Center. The second patrol however, would provide experience of a different sort.

While en route through the city, Holt thought he saw an IED on the side of the road. He called in the suspected roadside bomb to the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Detachment based at Camp Hurricane Point and directed the platoon to wait at the nearby Government Center.

Soon after EOD confirmed the IED and eliminated the threat, the Government Center came under attack from small arms fire. A firefight lasting approximately 10 minutes began between the Marines providing security for the Government Center and the insurgents.

"When the firefight died down, we pursued the attackers but were unable to find them," explained the Chicago native. "However, while in pursuit, units again came under fire. Once again, the enemy retreated and we pursued."

While the Marines did not capture the insurgents who attacked them, Holt still considered the pursuit a success.

"We taught the enemy that it's going to take more than cowardly attacks to intimidate us," the 24-year-old explained. "They learned that we are going to respond with overwhelming force and that we are going to win."

Lance Cpl. Chase Newland, a rifleman for 2nd Squad and Bellefourche, S.D., native, agreed with Holt and considered the missions both successes.

"I suppose it would have been better if we had found what we were looking for, but we all made it back safely, which is most important," said the Bellefourche High School graduate. "While we've been here, we have taken a lot of bad people off the street and have taught them a lesson."

All in all, in spite of the attacks, the missions had gone well, said Holt. The main objective was to go through the city, search for the enemy and teach 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines the lessons they had learned over the seven months they had spent in the area.

"We've shown them some of the teachings we've learned through trial and error," said Holt. "I consider that a success."



Cpl. Shane Suzuki

A Marine with Company A, 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, stands guard outside a house while the rest of his squad searches for weapons and enemies.

Deuce XO takes reins of command

Cpl. Cullen J. Tiernan

2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (FWD)

AL ASAD, Iraq -- For many people, doing two jobs at once is an unwelcomed burden. For hard-charging Marines, it's a welcomed challenge and a chance to become better at both.

Major Keith Couch, acting commanding officer of Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron 2, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (FWD), is leading his squadron in war while simultaneously flying combat missions in Iraq, protecting Marines and soldiers with their boots in the sand.

"Flying combat missions and commanding MWHS-2 work hand in hand," said the Leslie County, Ky., native. "Commanding headquarters squadron, you have the advantage of getting a first-hand perspective of what is happening on base. Then, flying missions allows you the implementation of that knowledge on the battlefield. You are able to fly and see intelligence unfold on the battlefield."

Couch said his position enables him to have a better perspective for doing both jobs. He compared it to having his cake and eating it too.

"I have a broader view of everything," said Couch. "Base security, what units are coming and going, basically, the whole picture of what goes on here."

The acting sergeant major of MWHS-2, Master Gunnery Sgt. William H. Butler, said Couch seems very comfortable in this element and he understands his roles and duties. This is Couch's second time serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and he is a veteran of flying missions in theater.

"He lets Marines do their jobs, and supports them," said Butler. "The Deuce (MWHS-2) family atmosphere, with tight-knit units, is easily kept alive under his leadership. Flying and commanding balance each other and keep him balanced in his decision-making process."

Couch will be flying AV-8B Harriers with Marine Attack Squadron 223. He

plans on flying a couple times per week, but is prepared to fly more as long as it does not interfere with his role commanding his Deuce Marines.

"Initially, the first time you go into combat you are a bit apprehensive," said Couch. "You learn to enjoy it because you get a chance to do what you have been training for years to do."

Couch has served as a forward air controller with 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment and 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion in Korea and Okinawa, Japan. His wealth of knowledge and experience makes him valuable to lead the Marines in his squadron and flying as a Harrier pilot.

"When I first got to VMA-223, he was a senior captain," said Capt. Richard Rusnok, the pilot training officer with VMA-223, who previously served with Couch during Operation Iraqi Freedom. "He was, and still is, very approachable and knowledgeable about tactics and systems. He's a good role model and having

him here helps us out a lot."

Rusnok recalled when Couch was leaving their squadron, he still sacrificed his own time to help him and the rest of the squadron as they prepared for weapons and tactics instruction.

"He was our maintenance officer, and now serves a vital role as a functional test pilot," said Rusnok, a native of Pittston, Pa. "After certain types of maintenance are performed on Harriers, only he and three other pilots from the squadron can fly the aircraft to ensure they are operational. Also, on the administrative side, he is someone we can call on whenever we have a problem."

Couch's dual abilities have enabled him to serve a double purpose against the insurgents.

"Sitting behind a desk, you can't really do anything when we experience (indirect fire)," said Couch. "As a pilot, I can go out and potentially stop that from happening here to us or someone else by prosecuting enemy targets."



Cpl. Cullen J. Tiernan

Major Keith Couch, acting commanding officer of Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron 2, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (FWD), poses in front of an AV-8B Harrier in Al Asad, Iraq.

Third IED attack doesn't faze sergeant

Sgt. Christi Prickett

II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq -- Most Marines in Iraq consider themselves lucky when they walk away from one improvised explosive device attack, but two, or even three?

Sergeant Matthew P. Dalrymple, team leader, 2nd TOW Platoon, 2nd Tank Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, is just like any other Marine in his unit. Except for the slight scarring on his right hand, the large bruises on the underside of his arm or the small, freshly bandaged shrapnel wounds, no one would guess he is recovering from his third IED attack.

It's business as usual now for the Chillicothe, Ohio native. No big ceremonies were given for the two Purple Hearts he's received since April.

"I don't need any ceremonies," said the 26-year-old. "I just got the certificates in formation, and that was that."

Nicknamed Dallas in high school because of the hard time people have pronouncing his name, Dalrymple is on his second deployment to Iraq in four years. The first one brought no injuries to him.

"The difference between the first and second deployments are the tactics the enemy is using," he said. "During the initial push, we were fighting an army. Now we're fighting terrorists. We didn't have armored vehicles or anything like that the first time because IEDs weren't a threat."

Looking at pictures of the vehicles he was riding in during the blasts, Dalrymple doesn't seem affected by any of the events. The first IED blast was in April, while the second was in July, and the third in September. He talks about each photograph while recalling what went on minutes after each attack.

"The corpsman bandaged up my hand after the first one," he said, looking at the small scars he has on his finger now. "The second attack I can hardly remember and the third one could have been a lot worse had the IED gone off even a second earlier."

Dalrymple received follow-on treatment and physical therapy at Fallujah Surgical to regain full movement with his right middle finger, which was injured in the first blast. He is grateful to the doctors on the outcome of his finger, and remembers what he was thinking as he was getting operated on.

"The normal reaction after you get hit is to get the guys who got you," he said. "That's what I was thinking when I had to go in."

According to his platoon commander, Dalrymple is a vital part of the team.

"If IEDs are out there then you can count on Sgt. 'Dallas' to blow them up for us," said 1st Lt. Sean D. Gobin. "He has always reacted aggressively against the triggerman, which proved successful during his second IED attack in which his crew destroyed the IED team."

Aggressiveness is something the Marines in the platoon have been taught since training for this deployment began.

"Being aggressive has been our key to success in hunting down the insurgents," said Gobin. "The Marines have to be able to think and act faster than the insurgents do."

Dalrymple feels the Marines are doing good things here.

"I do think we're changing Iraq," said Dalrymple, a black belt in taekwon do. "I think the Iraqis want [the insurgents] gone as much as we do. They just don't have our capabilities. If we deter the insurgency in a certain area, things start to get better there."

Dalrymple and his fellow Marines covered a large area of Al Anbar province, including Ferristown and Al Amariyah during 2nd TOW platoon's six month deployment here.

"We did dismounted and mounted patrols, cordon and searches, cache sweeps and [main supply route] security," Dalrymple said. "We're out all the time, depending on the mission."

The areas included many insurgent hot spots, which puts the platoon in the heart of what the war on terror is all about. Add to that the threat of another attack, and Dalrymple is a great example of a fearless Marine.

"What gets me out of bed each day is knowing we have a job to do," said Dalrymple. "I enjoy what I do. I was in the reserves before I came on active duty, so I knew what I was getting into."

When returning home, Dalrymple has a surprise waiting for him.

"My wife had our first baby in August," he said with a smile. "I can't wait to see him."



Courtesy Photo

Sergeant Matthew P. Dalrymple, team leader, 2nd TOW platoon, 2nd Tank Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, has lived to tell about his third improvised explosive device explosion since April.

Ramadan: The month of the Qur'an

2nd Marine Division Chaplain Office
News Release

Ramadan is the most sacred time of worship for all Muslims to honor Allah and to remember the giving of the Qur'an.

It is the fourth pillar of Islam with focus on the reading of the Qur'an, prayer, fasting, personal reflection, and almsgiving.

During Ramadan, Muslims will fast from sunrise to sunset. They will ingest nothing by mouth including food and water or anything nutritional.

Muslims will also abstain from sexual activity from sunrise to sunset, try to read the entire Qur'an and spend additional time in prayer.

Before sunrise, Muslims observing Ramadan will take part in a breakfast of dates and water.

After sunset, Muslims will end their fast with a meal consisting of a lentil soup and an apricot drink. They may also eat meals of Kouba (a baked rice dish) and Kunafa (a fine pastry).

When is Ramadan?

Ramadan is based upon a lunar calendar and will start once the religious scholars see the first signs of the new moon by the naked eye. Sometimes, this is a day late in the countries west of Indonesia, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia.

Each year Ramadan starts eleven days earlier to purposefully rotate the date in order to make the difficulty of the fast evenly distributed between Muslims living in the Northern and Southern hemispheres.

The following is additional guidance when showing cultural sensitivities during this time of Muslim worship:

Showing Respect For Religious Sites

There will be an increase in worshipers at mosques and other holy sites during Ramadan.

An Najaf and Karbala are considered holy cities. Expect an increase of Muslim pilgrims at these cities and their holy sites.

Never enter a mosque unless operationally necessary with proper military approval.

All Muslims have the freedom to observe Ramadan without interference.

Coalition forces are aware of Ramadan's importance for Mus-

lims throughout Iraq and respect the rights of all to participate in this important event.

Eid-ul-fitr (End of Ramadan)

Eid-ul-fitr is the most important festival in the Islamic calendar. The festival marks the end of Ramadan.

Eid marks the end of fasting with communal merrymaking that occurs in mosques, homes, and open spaces in towns and cities. It symbolizes Islam's world-wide fraternity.

It resembles Christmas in its religious joyfulness, special celebrations, and gift giving.

Cultural Sensitivity

Coalition forces support the Iraqi people's right to celebrate their national identity and rich heritage during this Muslim holy month.

Avoid the following cultural insensitivities:

- Calling Iraqis by derogatory names or labeling them with slang words.

- Referring to Iraqis by their religious preference.

- Any profane or derogatory gestures.

Avoid the following during fast times in the presence of Iraqis:

- Arguments and disputes.

- Loud music or speech.

- Using profanity or vulgar language.

Bottom Line to Remember During Ramadan:

- Don't eat or drink in front of Muslims during Ramadan. They are fasting

during daylight hours and are strictly forbidden to take anything by mouth.

- Most restaurants are open only after sunset during Ramadan.

- Don't have food or snacks in plain sight during Ramadan.

- Don't smoke or chew gum in the presence of Muslims during Ramadan.

- Don't use profane words or gestures at this time!

- Most women will be veiled and covered throughout Ramadan.

- Muslim families will gather together daily after sundown to celebrate the end of the fast. Don't be alarmed if you see large groups of families gathering in homes or mosques.



Reserve Marine keeps recon rolling

Lance Cpl. Evan M. Eagan
II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)

AL AMARIYAH, Iraq -- After graduating high school in 1992, and attending community college for one year, Gerald Garcia transitioned into the civilian work force.

Bouncing between jobs in corrections and skilled labor for nearly seven years, the Tivoli, Texas, native, had a long held dream of becoming a member of the Corps.

When Garcia decided to act on his dream at the age of 25, he feared his window of opportunity had passed.

Because of pain he experienced in his knee, he was unsure of whether his body would be able to handle the rigorous training Marine Corps boot camp subjected to its recruits.

With a 'nothing to lose' attitude, Gar-

cia left for Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego in 1999 to follow his dream.

"The Marine Corps is the best military service there is and I wanted to be a part of it," said the 31-year-old. "I had an MRI [Magnetic Resonance Imaging] done and nothing came back that was wrong, but I was still a little bit worried because I had some pain. But, it was something that I always wanted to do and never went through with. I also wanted to see if I could still do it at an older age than most recruits."

Because he chose to be a reservist, he knew he would be stationed with one of the San Antonio-based units within 4th Reconnaissance Battalion, 4th Marine Division. However, instead of becoming a reconnaissance trained Marine, Garcia opted for the Nuclear, Biological and Chemical military occupational specialty.

"I didn't know how my knee would hold up with the recon training," he said. "So I decided to do NBC."

Now the rank of corporal, Garcia is assigned to Iraqi Security Force Platoon, Echo Company, 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion, 2nd Marine Division.

When stateside, Garcia is the NBC noncommissioned officer for the unit and is in charge of training for all NBC related matters, however, in Iraq he has filled a new duty.

"I inventory all equipment, run the gas chamber and mask confidence course to make sure the Marines stay up to date with their annual training back in San Antonio," he said. "Out here [Iraq] I am a driver for the ISF Platoon."

Garcia arrived in Iraq earlier this year with his unit, which is attached to 3rd Recon, and worked in the Reconnaissance Operations Center until he was recruited to be a driver with ISF Platoon.

"The ISF Platoon had a shortage of Marines so they pulled me from my other duties in the ROC," he said. "I had a humvee license but I didn't drive much in the states. I really didn't have too much experience with the humvee."

Since joining the platoon, which formed more than three months ago to train Iraqi Army soldiers and give them experience working next to Marines, Garcia has been a part of every major operation.

"I was excited to have the opportunity to do it," he said. "I've learned a lot since I've been over here. I have definitely honed my driving skills."

When he returns home next month, Garcia plans on spending time with his family and getting back to work at the Comal County Sheriff's Office in Texas.



Lance Cpl. Evan M. Eagan

Corporal Gerald Garcia stands next to his humvee during a recent operation in AlAnbar province. Garcia, a reservist with Iraqi Security Force Platoon, Echo Company, 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, is serving his first deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Caught in the Spotlight

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq -- When the majority of people aboard the camp are preparing for bed, there are Marines scattered throughout walking their post. These protectors stand watch in the stillness of the night with their weapons loaded, providing security against those who might do harm to the members of the camp.

One of those on guard, Lance Cpl. Glade L. Wallen, 29, is just one of many who stands watch every night, fighting complacency, sleepiness and boredom in order to provide the security necessary for a base in the heart of Al Anbar province.

"I walk my post back and forth and I try to think about things," he said of what he does to stay alert as his thoughts drift to home and his young son.

Nearly 6 feet tall with an average build, Wallen's story has been filled with personal struggle and pain. His mother died after a long fight with cancer nearly eight years ago.

Before joining the Corps, the Portland, Ore., native had a newborn son and he moved with his family throughout Oregon, Utah, Nevada, California and Washington state working as a food service manager in the restaurant industry and doing other side jobs.

"I was caught up with work, supporting my family," said the trained food service specialist assigned to the Food Service Section, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Headquarters Group, II MEF (FWD). "I was working two to three jobs at the time."

Partly in search of financial stability and partly a personal dream, Wallen went to boot camp in May 2003.

"My son and his mom moved [away] and I was at a down point in my life," said the 1995 graduate of Timpview High School in Provo, Utah. "My expenses were above my income when a recruiter approached me and it was something I had wanted to do."

Wallen could have gone into another

branch of the military with a shorter boot camp or he could have applied to the job programs the federal government offers.

Instead, he joined the Marines.

"I wanted the benefits but it wasn't the main reason why I joined," said Wallen. "I wanted the title of Marine."

Since graduating from boot camp, Wallen has had some set backs. During military occupational specialty school, a personal medical condition surfaced and had to be physically evaluated for several months. After being cleared, Wallen reported to II MHG, leaving 10 months later for deployment to Camp Fallujah, Iraq.

Quiet and soft spoken, Wallen takes his challenges in stride by taking them 'one day at a time.' One aspect of the Corps that continues to stand out to him is the camaraderie shown amongst Leathernecks.

"One of the things I like about the Marine Corps is the sense of brotherhood," he said. "The sense that we are there for each other and like brothers we may not always agree but we've got each other's back."

Wallen is scheduled to return to the states early next year. After the end of his term, he is contemplating using his Montgomery G.I. Bill to pay for his studies computer graphics.



Lance Cpl. Glade L. Wallen

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Even the volume of traffic is a noted sign that trouble could be just around the bend.

The Marines repeat the process at the next checkpoint. This time Brock's gunner shouts, "Three Iraqi males in a black Ford Taurus, sergeant; they're being checked."

After a few moments, the gunner yells, "They've been searched and let go, sergeant."

"Alright. Let's go," Brock shouts to Clinton.

"We have good gunners," Brock said. "They're about the busiest guys on the convoy."

Private First Class Chris L. Clark is the gunner aboard Brock's vehicle. He stands for the entire patrol, his head just barely breaching the top of the turret, a Browning M2 .50-caliber machine gun at his fingertips. His eyes continuously scan the roadsides and horizon for movement and ensures the distance between the convoy's vehicles doesn't change without his knowing. He knows the reality of his situation.

"When I'm up there I see threats," the 22-year-old Cape Coral, Fla., native said. "There are people out here who want to kill me and my fellow Marines. You're always in a combat zone, even when you're sleeping in your rack. Anything can happen."

Even still, Clark hopes to return to Iraq after his tour is complete in order to pass his knowledge on to future military policeman deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"This is what I joined the Marines to do," he said. "I want to come back and be the experienced guy. It's a good feeling."

After reaching and clearing the final checkpoint the Marines head back to base, their mission complete only after everyone returns safely. Today they found no IEDs and the roads are clear, no cause for alarm, but that doesn't change their dedicated vigilance.

"Some days are busy, some days are slow," Brock says. "But you gotta' treat every day like it's busy. Because the day you don't is the day they get you."